

for the conduct of campaigns directly in the hands of the candidates. Our legislation is not the solution for all of the problems now facing us, but I believe it is a good solid beginning to accomplish meaningful campaign finance reform.

After a series of hearings in the Senate Rules Committee this spring on campaign finance reform, we will now be able to put a bill on the Senate Calendar that has bipartisan support. If we are to accomplish comprehensive reform this year, bipartisan support is essential and our bill has that support.

While I was very pleased with the recent vote in Congress to require disclosure for the '527' organizations, that bill is not a substitute for more comprehensive campaign finance reform. It is a solution for a small problem. We need to continue to fight for campaign finance reform that is broader and more comprehensive.

I am hopeful that the full Senate will be able to debate comprehensive campaign finance reform legislation, including the Open and Accountable Campaign Financing Act of 2000, this year. We have an opportunity to achieve something reasonable and responsible this year.

Again, I would like to thank Senator MCCONNELL for holding hearings in the Rules Committee on campaign finance reform and helping move the process along. I look forward to working with him and all Senators interested in advancing campaign finance reform.

VICTIMS OF GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, it has been more than a year since the Columbine tragedy, but still this Republican Congress refuses to act on sensible gun legislation.

Since Columbine, thousands of Americans have been killed by gunfire. Until we act, Democrats in the Senate will read some of the names of those who lost their lives to gun violence in the past year, and we will continue to do so every day that the Senate is in session.

In the name of those who died, we will continue this fight. Following are the names of some of the people who were killed by gunfire one year ago today.

July 26:

Frederick Branch, 17, Memphis, TN; Kenny Curry, 30, Chicago, IL; Mendell Jones, 17, Baltimore, MD; Eduardo Lezcano, 36, Miami-Dade County, FL; Andre Moore, 21, Baltimore, MD; Kenneth Plaster, 52, Houston, TX; Mark Pringle, 18, Baltimore, MD; Carlton Valentine, 33, Baltimore, MD; Unidentified male, Detroit, MI.

We cannot sit back and allow such senseless gun violence to continue. The deaths of these people are a reminder to all of us that we need to enact sensible gun legislation now.

RUSSIAN WARHEADS/DOMESTIC SECURITY

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss two issues of

great importance to our national security and our energy security—the agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation which provides for the conversion of Russian highly enriched uranium (HEU) derived from the warheads into fuel for civilian nuclear power plants, and the need for the United States to maintain a viable uranium enrichment capability.

First, let me give you a bit of history.

In 1992, the Energy Policy Act established the United States Enrichment Corporation as a wholly-owned government corporation to take over the Department of Energy's uranium enrichment enterprise. The Corporation was to operate as a business enterprise on a profitable and efficient basis and maximize the long-term valuation of the Corporation to the Treasury of the United States. The objective was to eventually privatize the Corporation as a viable business enterprise able to compete in world markets. Subsequently, the Corporation was selected as Executive Agent for, and entrusted with, the responsibility for carrying out the Russian HEU Agreement.

Enactment of the 1992 Act was the culmination of a decade of bipartisan effort spearheaded by Senators DOMENICI and Ford. Extensive hearings were held in both the House and the Senate and the legislation garnered the strong support of the Bush Administration.

Recognizing the complexity of privatization and the national security implications of the Russian HEU Agreement, Congress enacted the USEC Privatization Act of 1996. The Act provided the mechanics for privatization, clarified the relationship between a private USEC and the U.S. Government, and addressed concerns related to the implementation of the Russian HEU Agreement. The Corporation was sold in July of 1998.

Implementation of the Russian HEU Agreement has been important for the government and USEC. This government-to-government agreement facilitates Russian conversion of highly enriched uranium taken from their dismantled nuclear weapons into fuel purchased by USEC and resold for use in commercial nuclear power plants. The program is financed as a commercial transaction.

Every day, new warnings are heard about the ability of one rogue state or some well-financed terrorist to obtain weapons-grade nuclear materials on the black market. The Russian HEU Agreement addresses those concerns by converting thousands of nuclear warheads into fuel for electric power plants—the quintessential swords to plowshares concept. In spite of some start-up problems, implementation of the Agreement has resulted in the conversion of the equivalent of nearly 4,000 nuclear warheads into fuel for U.S. commercial power plants. The process, as well as purchases and shipments to USEC, continues.

From the outset, many felt there were built-in contradictions between

the objectives of maintaining a viable domestic uranium enrichment capability while controlling the disposal of former Soviet nuclear weapons. But, all things considered, the program to date has been a success. Without question our Nation's national security—our most important charge as lawmakers—has been enhanced by implementation of this Agreement.

Mr. President, the Russian HEU Agreement contributes to our Nation's security, but the Agreement also adversely affects the enterprise that makes this commercial solution to a national security problem possible. This difficulty was understood when the government adopted this program. Purchases of large quantities of Russian weapons derived material result in growing effects on the companies in the private sector domestic nuclear fuel cycle. Our uranium mining, conversion, and enrichment industries have been affected. The result has been steadily declining market prices for all phases of the nuclear fuel cycle. USEC, its plant workers, and the communities dependent upon those plants are being hit especially hard. As Executive Agent, USEC has suffered substantial losses due to fixed price purchases from Russia as well as increased costs due to reduced levels of domestic production resulting from introduction of the Russian material into the market.

Earlier this year, and with the support of the Administration, USEC had been negotiating with Russia to amend the Agreement to include market-based pricing. I have been advised that USEC closely coordinated its plans and intentions with the President's Interagency Enrichment Oversight Committee at all phases of its discussions with the Russians. Yet, as USEC and the Russians were meeting in Moscow to sign the new Agreement, the Department of Energy, a member of the Oversight Committee, prevented the signing at the last minute.

I can not understand why the Energy Department would prevent the adoption of an amendment that would stabilize the Agreement through the remaining thirteen years of the program. Reportedly the terms were acceptable to both parties. In addition, the Agreement would have protected the interests of our own domestic nuclear fuel industry. As part of the Agreement, Russia wanted USEC to purchase commercially produced enrichment in addition to the weapons derived enrichment. USEC negotiated terms consistent with a previous Administration approved program making it mandatory that this additional quantity be matched with domestically produced enrichment. In addition, no additional natural uranium would be brought into the domestic market. The amendment to the Agreement was specifically crafted so that no damage would be inflicted upon the domestic nuclear fuel cycle as a result of purchasing the additional material.

The Department of Energy's action threatens to destabilize the agreement.